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DEPARTMENT PASS TO USAID AND OFDA

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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA NOTES (AUG 11 - AUG 24, 2007)

¶1. (U) Summary: The following Northern Uganda Notes provides information on the situation on the ground and USG activities aimed at meeting Mission's objectives in northern Uganda. These objectives include promoting regional stability through peace and security, good governance, access to social services, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance. Post appreciates feedback from consumers on the utility of this product and any gaps in information that need to be filled. End Summary.

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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES
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¶2. (SBU) The Government of Uganda held its first in a series of community consultations on accountability and reconciliation (Agenda Item 3 of the Juba peace process) in Gulu August 20 to 22. The consultation process is national and will culminate in a Kampala meeting to be held on September 26-27. The remaining community meetings will be held in Adjumani, Soroti, Lira, Mbale, Masaka, Mbarara, Masindi, and Arua. The Gulu consultation was attended by almost three hundred representatives from all levels of local government, civil society, traditional leaders, opinion leaders, religious leaders, women, youth, IDP camp leadership and other victims groups.

¶3. (SBU) Initial feedback reinforces suggestions to use a combination of traditional systems and the formal legal system to achieve accountability and reconciliation. Neither will be satisfactory separately. There is popular support to amend Ugandan law to include a list of crimes stipulated by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in order to try senior LRA in a way that satisfies the Rome Statute/ICC requirements nationally. There are concerns that amnesty and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) packages for the LRA may be seen as rewarding perpetrators, when the majority of the population in the north has been victimized by the war. Finally, there is a strong desire for a truth telling process that includes UPDF. Overall, the consultative process, as a national process, is being viewed positively, and the community appreciates the opportunity to have its voices heard.

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY
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¶3. (U) USAID has designed a new program aimed at mitigating the causes and consequences of conflict in order to promote stability, peace and reconciliation in Uganda. The program will be entitled Stability, Peace and Reconciliation In Northern Uganda (SPRING). Building on earlier and ongoing Mission programming in the North,

including the Northern Uganda Peace Initiative (NUPI) and the Community Resilience and Dialogue (CRD) program, the new program will specifically seek to reduce current conflict, prevent the escalation of social, economic and political tensions and strengthen institutions for the promotion of peace and reconciliation. To achieve this goal, SPRING will support a core set of activities in three component areas: (1) Peace-building and reconciliation; (2) Economic security and social inclusion and (3) Access to justice. SPRING will implement model activities which are scaleable, replicable, and sustainable. Activities will aim to have a lasting impact on promoting stability and consolidating peace by combining peace building efforts with economic opportunities that foster and entrench peace, while also improving access to justice for vulnerable populations.

14. (U) SPRING will support the GOU's stated priority to end the conflict in northern Uganda peacefully and help establish the conditions for a transition from relief to recovery and development for the conflict-affected population in the North, as outlined in the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (2007-2010) and the GOU's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) (2005-2008). The proposed program will be the core activity in USAID's multi-sector effort to mitigate the causes and consequences of violent conflict in Uganda. Under the SPRING activity, USAID will make an award of up to USD 9,500,000 for a period of 36 months.

15. (U) Heavy rains since July in Teso Region have damaged crops and displaced approximately 2300 to 2800 households according to Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and UN OCHA. The affected population includes persons displaced (IDPs) by the LRA and cattle raiders from Karamoja. Most affected areas are Ngariam, Magoro, Kapujan, Katakwi and Omodoi sub-counties in Katakwi District, and Abarilela, Acowa, Obalanga and Asamuk sub-counties in Amuria District. Initial reports that 33,000 people were displaced appear to be inflated; however, the total affected population might be as high as 30,000.

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The affected area is difficult to access, and roads have been cut off by the rains. Immediate needs are supplies to prevent cholera outbreaks, insecticide treated nets to mitigate against an increase in malaria for the most affected, and plastic sheeting. UN OCHA is leading an interagency assessment. No external assistance has been requested at this time. Rains are expected to continue until late September.

16. (U) IDP returns continue at a slow pace in Acholi sub-region, but the pace is expected to increase significantly in November to December when grass is widely available for thatching roofs (SEPTTEL). The increase in returns is expected with or without a final peace agreement. However, it is likely that across Acholiland many IDPs will keep some presence in the camps to access services, and as a back-up plan should fighting resume. Limited access to basic services in return areas will continue to be a contributing factor to the splitting of families. Faced with tough decisions, many families choose to leave school aged children in camps with relatives to attend classes while they start to rebuild and wait for the village school to re-open.

17. (U) Congresswoman Nita Lowey, six other members of congress and five congressional staffers visited Gulu on Sunday, August 19 accompanied by Ambassador Steve Browning. The CODEL observed NGO and USAID projects at the Umyama IDP Camp, received a briefing at the World Food Program warehouse in Gulu, discussed current humanitarian relief programs at a working lunch with NGO partners, and met with local government officials and religious leaders.

SECURITY UPDATE

18. (SBU) August 15 to 17 Senior Advisor on Conflict Resolution, Timothy Shortley, traveled to northern Uganda to meet with local leaders and affected populations. The primary objectives of the trip were to discuss the peace process in Juba, including community consultations on agenda item three; how the US can help ensure a successful conclusion to the peace process, and a dignified return of the displaced population (IDPs); and support reconciliation and recovery. The Senior Advisor met with IDPs and returnees in Omiyanima sub-county, Kitgum District, district officials in Gulu and Kitgum, NGOs, UN agencies, members of the Acholi Religious

Leaders Peace Initiative, and the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO). The visit was well received. There is positive momentum around the peace process and IDP returns; however, gaps remain in recovery assistance that if unaddressed could hamper slow the process of recovery.

¶9. (U) No security threats in LRA areas. Little activity along the eastern boarder with Karamoja, raids are usually low during the rainy season.

¶10. (SBU) Deputy Chief of Police Otim and State Prosecutor Martin agreed to implement roll call training for constables with the assistance of a prosecutor providing legal updates. This new process will improve skills and knowledge and allow constables to perform at a higher level in serving the public.

IN THE MEDIA AND THE WEB

¶11. (U) On August 10 Ambassador Browning met with Ben Keesey, CEO of Invisible Children, Inc., and other representatives from the non-profit organization. IC used the meeting to update the Ambassador on their activities and to describe their efforts to provide to their audiences timely information on conditions in northern Uganda. IC representatives visiting U.S. college campuses, for example, are instructed to update audiences on the current night commuter statistics. The Invisible Children website's "News and Press" Section runs the State Department's August 16 statement in support of the Juba peace talks. The website also reprints a letter from A/S Bergner to Senator Feingold, describing the appointment of Timothy Shortley as Senior Advisor Conflict in Africa. The website, updated on August 17, editorializes that "this is (sic) most significant visible progress in U.S. policy toward the crisis in a long time, and a direct result in (sic) the efforts of IC and our partners in Washington, D.C."
BROWNING